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**TURKMENISTAN**

## SUCCESS STORY

# A Study Tour Yields New Initiatives

**A USAID alumna creates new opportunities for rural youth.**



Participants of a seminar on community health at the Beyik Turkmenbashi resource center. Photo: ACCELS

*"I learned a lot by observing how my U.S. colleagues work with vulnerable populations. I have aspirations and look for new opportunities to promote further democratization of my country."*

Aynabad Muhamova, participant of the USAID Community Connections program

Using the knowledge and skills gained during a USAID study program, Aynabad Muhamova opened a resource center for youth in the remote Beyik Turkmenbashi district in the Lebap province of Turkmenistan.

Aynabad works as a First Aid Program Coordinator at the National Red Crescent Society. Along with eight other representatives from Turkmenistan, the young woman traveled to Raleigh, North Carolina in 2006 for a 3-week training "Youth Alternatives to Drug Use," arranged by the USAID Community Connections program. The program aimed to expose Turkmen professionals to new ways for reaching at-risk youth and for prevention of drug abuse and HIV/AIDS. "I learned a lot by observing how my U.S. colleagues work with vulnerable populations," says Aynabad.

After the study tour, Aynabad rallied her colleagues to create a center that would provide training to Beyik Turkmenbashi youth. Due to the district's remoteness and lack of resources, young people in Beyik Turkmenbashi had few opportunities to realize their professional dreams.

Aynabad and her colleagues came up with a proposal, obtained funding from the National Red Crescent Society, premises from the local authorities, and in January 2008 the resource center was up and running. The center operates a small sewing workshop and a training facility, and serves approximately 35 people a week. At the sewing workshop, local girls learn the sewing craft, so that they can earn money and contribute to household expenses. The training facilities are used to conduct community health seminars for young people.

Aynabad is closely involved with center's work. She uses the techniques learned during the USAID program to conduct trainings on community health, healthy lifestyle, and provision of the first aid. She is planning to expand the activities of the center so that the girls who attend sewing classes can receive assistance in finding employment. She also wants to recruit a local textile factory to supply materials for the sewing classes so that the girls can earn money producing garments. "I believe the outcome depends on your professionalism in delivering information to people," says Aynabad. "I have aspirations and look for new opportunities to promote further democratization of my country."